

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 19, 2021

9:09 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Shelley Hughes

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 20

"An Act relating to recognition of certificates of out-of-state teachers."

- MOVED CSSB 20 (EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 80

"An Act relating to mental health education."

- HEARD AND HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 72

"An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 20

SHORT TITLE: OUT OF STATE TEACHER RECIPROCITY

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

| | | |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 01/22/21 | (S) | PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21 |
| 01/22/21 | (S) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 01/22/21 | (S) | EDC, FIN |
| 03/15/21 | (S) | EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205 |

03/15/21 (S) Heard & Held
03/15/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/19/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 80

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) GRAY-JACKSON

02/12/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/12/21 (S) EDC, HSS, FIN
03/10/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/10/21 (S) Heard & Held
03/10/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/19/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 72

SHORT TITLE: SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) STEVENS

02/05/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/05/21 (S) EDC, CRA
03/10/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/10/21 (S) Heard & Held
03/10/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/19/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the committee substitute for SB 20.

CASSIDY FRANCIES, Policy Researcher
Education Commission of the States
Denver, Colorado

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a national perspective on license reciprocity.

TIFFANY MCDOLE, Senior Policy Analyst
Education Commission of the States
Denver, Colorado

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a national perspective on license reciprocity.

TAMMIE PERREAULT, Northwest Regional Liaison
Department of Defense, Military & Family Policy
Washington, D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

THERESA OBERMEYER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

DAVID NEES, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

LISA PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 20.

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, SB 80 sponsor
Alaska State Legislature

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke to comments on SB 80.

JASON LESSARD, Executive Director
NAMI Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 80.

ZOE KAPLAN
Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 80.

NATALIE FRASER
Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 80.

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 80.

LISA PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 80.

KATIE BOTZ, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 80.

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 80.

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the changes in the committee substitute for SB 72.

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the department perspective on SB 72.

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 72.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:09:25 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Stevens, and Chair Holland. Senator Micciche arrived during the course of the meeting.

SB 20-OUT OF STATE TEACHER RECIPROCITY

9:10:06 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 20 "An Act relating to recognition of certificates of out-of-state teachers."

He asked for a motion to adopt the committee substitute (CS).

9:10:19 AM

SENATOR STEVENS moved to adopt the work draft committee substitute (CS) for SB 20, work order 32-LS0202\B, as the working document.

9:10:34 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND objected for purposes of discussion and asked Mr. Lamkin to explain the changes.

9:10:46 AM

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated the CS addresses concerns that were brought up. He explained the following changes:

Change #1 The title, Page 1, Line 1, following "relating to" Delete: "recognition of certificates of out-of-state teachers." Insert: "teaching certificates for teachers holding out-of-state certificates."

Change #2 (Version A) Section 2 (page 2 Lines 8-11) Relating to a requirement for an out-of-state teacher to have a baccalaureate degree, in version A this reference was being repealed. Version B maintains the statute.

Change #3 Section 3, relating to the time period an out-of-state teacher has to complete course trainings in Alaska and multi- / cross-cultural studies, from three years to two years.

Change #4 Version A, Section 5 (page 3, Line 1-11) Relating to an exemption for out-of-state certificate holders from having to hold a baccalaureate degree. This section was deleted from Version B.

Change #5 In version B, a new section 5 (page 3, Lines 1-3) was drafted, directing the department to adopt regulations to assist in expediting the issuance of a certificate for military spouses.

9:11:50 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND removed his objection. There being no further objection, version B was before the committee.

SENATOR STEVENS said he appreciated the input of the committee to make the bill stronger and better.

CHAIR HOLLAND called on Education Commission of the States (ECS) to make their presentation

[9:12:56 AM](#)

CASSIDY FRANCIES, Policy Researcher, Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado, introduced herself.

[9:13:30 AM](#)

TIFFANY MCDOLE, Senior Policy Analyst, Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado, introduced herself.

MS. FRANCIES said that ECS is a nonadvocacy, nonpartisan organization that provides policy support and independent research to the states. Last year ECS looked at policies regarding teacher license reciprocity across the 50 states. She showed slide 2 of the presentation License Reciprocity: National Landscape. Research shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor impacting student achievement. As a result, policymakers take great interest in recruiting and retaining effective teachers.

MS. FRANCIES presented slide 3 and said many states struggle with teacher shortages. Teacher shortages are often concentrated to schools with specific characteristics and certain subject areas. Teacher shortages are impacted by mismatched supply and demand and state policies. Any policy related to teacher licensure, retention and recruitment, and license reciprocity will intersect with the issue of teacher shortages.

MS. FRANCIES presented slide 4 and said policymakers balance policy priorities which seem to be in competition with each other:

In setting licensure policy, policymakers balance several priorities:

- Ensuring all teachers are equipped for the job
- Ensuring there are enough teachers to fill vacancies
- Ensuring that licensure requirements do not unintentionally keep strong candidates out of the classroom

MS. FRANCIES presented slide 5 on NASDTEC (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification), an interstate agreement among 47 states and D.C. NASDTEC facilitates educator mobility between states by outlining minimum requirements. A bachelor's degree is a minimum essential component of an approved educator preparation program and teacher licensure through the agreement. States can require their own specific requirements

9:17:44 AM

SENATOR BEGICH clarified that unlike some other interstate compacts, NASDTEC allows states to go beyond the compact.

MS. FRANCIES replied that is correct. NASDTEC only sets the minimum requirements. States can add to that.

SENATOR BEGICH said that is good news.

MS. FRANCIES said ECS wanted to know how many states offer "full license reciprocity," which allows fully licensed out-of-state teachers, regardless of experience, to be immediately eligible to receive a standard teaching license, subject to few or no additional requirements. She showed a map on slide 7 that showed eight states offer full license reciprocity. The other states have additional requirements for out-of-state license seekers. The most common additional requirements are additional courses and assessment scores. Some states provide exemptions for some candidates, often those with a certain number of years of experience or advanced licensure.

SENATOR BEGICH asked if even if Alaska adopted the bill, it would still be one of the gray states because the bill has additional requirements and set time periods. A person can get reciprocity, but maintaining it is contingent on completing Alaska history and geography and those kinds of things, so that would not be full license reciprocity.

MS. FRANCIES said she believes the bill would move Alaska to full license reciprocity because it would allow teachers to immediately receive a license, regardless of experience or other considerations.

9:21:02 AM

MS. FRANCIES noted three barriers to transferring a license: finding reliable information; cost, especially for military spouses; and time to complete an application and processing time.

MS. FRANCIES said the impact on teachers is that 41 percent of teachers who left the profession but would consider returning cited the ability to transfer their license out of state as a consideration when deciding whether to return to the classroom, according to a national survey. There may be teachers in states who are qualified to teach but aren't because of difficulties or concerns with transferring licenses. This has the potential to exasperate the shortage.

MS. FRANCIES noted the resources ECS provided to the committee.

SENATOR BEGICH shared this his wife is a former certified teacher from Virginia. This might benefit his family, so he is putting that conflict on the record.

CHAIR HOLLAND invited Tammie Perreault to testify.

[9:24:20 AM](#)

TAMMIE PERREAULT, Northwest Regional Liaison, Department of Defense, Military & Family Policy, Washington, D.C., said her mission is to be a resource for state policy makers to address quality of life issues for military families. The Department of Defense (DOD) is in support of SB 20. The process for teachers licensed in another state to become fully licensed in a new state often requires extensive documentation, additional testing, and coursework and may involve application processing delays. This creates further barriers for military spouse teachers to seamlessly continue on their career paths. SB 20 reduces these barriers. One of the key policies of SB 20 is that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development adopt regulations which provide for expedited processing of applications for license to teach in the state for military spouses. This was a specific DOD request as military spouses are best served by receiving their license to practice an occupation within 30 days of when they make their application. Currently, many states have implemented this policy.

[9:26:09 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE joined the committee.

MS. PERREAULT said that teaching is the most prevalent profession among licensed military spouses. The annual percentage of military spouses who move across state lines is 14.5 percent compared to only 1.1 percent of the general population. Additionally, 68 percent of married service members reported that their spouse's ability to maintain a career

impacts their decision to stay in the military. This is why this is so important to the DOD, and 88 percent of military spouses reported wanting or needing to work. The DOD appreciates the tremendous effort Alaska has made to support military families and is thankful to Senator Stevens for introducing this important legislation.

[9:27:21 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony on SB 20.

[9:27:35 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau, Alaska, said that Alaska is experiencing a crisis with the teacher shortage. This bill would alleviate some of that. The bill maintains rigor and would attract teachers from out of state and retains the multicultural courses required in Alaska for a license.

[9:28:53 AM](#)

THERESA OBERMEYER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, agreed with the testimony and asked where Alaska would be without its wonderful teachers. There is no group she supports more. She has been a certified teacher since 1979. She added that she thinks reciprocity should be extended to attorneys.

[9:31:03 AM](#)

DAVID NEES, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said that he is a retired teacher. SB 20 is an excellent bill. Senator Begich asked an excellent question about reciprocity. One of the barriers facing teachers from out of state is the multicultural and Alaska Native requirement. When he worked for the Anchorage School District, teachers from out of state usually would decide in the second or third year whether they were staying or going. Moving the deadline to two years will be more of a barrier than the committee thinks it will be. Teachers have to adopt to a new district while getting their lives focused. The bill would be better if the courses did not have to be taken for two years. That would be a minor change in the bill. Postponing the cost of taking coursework that will not be used in another state would be beneficial for recruiting teachers.

[9:33:17 AM](#)

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, said the Anchorage School District is in favor of the flexibility and time allotted for educators to be certified. She shared that seven percent of Anchorage School District educators are military spouses, so the flexibility adds

value to recruitment. The Anchorage School District has many immersion teachers who come from other countries. The bill allows for that and ASD supports it. Someone's efficacy is by example and previous jobs. It is beneficial to be able to hire teachers and look at their past record of educating students.

SENATOR STEVENS asked, as a superintendent who hires more teachers than anyone else in the state, if it is realistic to require somebody to complete the Alaska history and multicultural studies in two years.

DR. BISHOP replied, what the former speaker shared may have been true in earlier times, but with online learning, it is not a barrier at this time. Having an Alaska Native studies course in another state is value added.

9:35:45 AM

LISA PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Juneau, Alaska, said she and Senator Stevens served on the governor's taskforce for teacher retention and recruitment and had a dialogue about how important this would be for Alaska. All are aware of the crisis of teacher shortage in Alaska. The Alaska Council of School Administrators joint position statement emphasizes that retaining effective educators is essential to increasing student achievement and eliminating academic disparities for all Alaskan students. SB 20 sits squarely with its position statement that all members support. Regarding the Alaska Native studies course, Alaska Staff Development Network offers multiple opportunities for educators to complete those studies, online, virtually, and in a webinar. They are readily available to educators and can be completed within that timeframe.

9:38:10 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND closed public testimony on SB 20 and asked the will of the committee.

9:38:36 AM

SENATOR STEVENS moved to report the committee substitute (CS) for SB 20, work order 32-LS0478\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

There being no objection, CSSB 20(EDC) was reported from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

9:38:59 AM

At ease

SB 80-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

9:40:30 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 80 "An Act relating to mental health education."

He noted that Senator Gray-Jackson had provided written testimony to answer some questions from the committee.

9:40:50 AM

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, SB 80 sponsor, Alaska State Legislature, thanked the chair for noting that she had responded to the questions from the committee.

SENATOR BEGICH said he received a note with two suggestions from the Suicide Prevention Council and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and the Alaska Mental Health Board. One suggestion is that the language describing legislative intent remove the named mental health organizations and instead use "in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations." That intent is to have a broad group without naming groups that may not always be in existence. He asked if Senator Gray-Jackson is comfortable with the suggestion.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON answered that it is a good suggestion.

SENATOR BEGICH said that some stakeholders were confused between the words standards and guidelines. They suggested changing that to "health guidelines for instruction in mental health" and "shall be developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations" to be consistent.

9:43:13 AM

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied that is another excellent suggestion.

9:43:22 AM

At ease

9:43:58 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND moved to invited testimony on SB 80.

9:44:11 AM

JASON LESSARD, Executive Director, NAMI Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, said he is on the governing board of Alaska Psychiatric Institute, the suicide prevention coalition, and the adult advisor of MHAT, Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling. Mental health is health. While it is a simple and obvious statement, it is still a struggle to incorporate that concept into school curriculum. NAMI chapters, state and nationally, are advocating for these updates to school standards, curriculum, and guidelines. There is a whole lot of data that he could share that is relevant, but he will focus on two data points. The first is that one in five U.S. adults experience a mental illness. He asked the committee to think about how common that is, many students come from families where a loved one has a mental illness. This is not just about students' mental health. It is about evidence-based curriculum to discuss and demystify a set of illnesses that affect 20 percent of the population. That is just diagnosed mental illness. The next data point is that 50 percent of all lifetime mental illness begin by the age of 14, 75 percent by age 24. This is largely happening in the teen brain, and it is vital to talk to them about it. That is why this type of legislation and hopefully these types of changes to curriculum statewide are critical. Early intervention is critical. Giving students a better understanding of mental illness and wellness, the language to talk about it safely, and the understanding of how and where to find resources for themselves, their peers or family is crucial. They learn to talk about the topic in an educated, evidence-based, proactive, and caring way.

9:46:53 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony on SB 80.

9:47:08 AM

ZOE KAPLAN, Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling, Anchorage, Alaska, said she is a cofounder of Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling and testifying on her own behalf. This bill entered the house last year as HB 181 and was postponed because of COVID. Unfortunately, that is an apt metaphor for the state's approach to mental health. Alaska has often negated mental health legislation for things considered more important in the moment when the safety and well-being of youth should be prioritized. In 2019, 38 percent of Alaska youth surveyed had a depressive episode, 21 percent made a suicide plan, and 19.7 percent attempted suicide. These statistics are repeated over and over because they are staggering and awful.

This bill was important last year and even more important now. Many of her peers before COVID did not consider themselves to have a mental health condition. Once isolated they experienced depressive symptoms for the first time in their lives. They didn't know how to reach out for help because have not received any education or information about it. It will not be resolved on its own when students return to school. Alaska students have had struggles with mental health well before COVID and will well after. The most responsible and necessary thing to do for the safety and well-being of Alaska youth is to set standards for mental health education. Mental health affects one in five. That is a staggeringly large number.

[9:49:54 AM](#)

NATALIE FRASER, Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling, Anchorage, Alaska, said that she is a cofounder of Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling and is representing herself. She deals with a mental health condition. Growing up she did not have knowledge about depression and other mental health conditions and neither did her family. Despite meeting every health curriculum requirement, no one had ever had formal education about mental health. She believed, like many others, that mental illness was something that other people had. She continued to believe that until she made an attempt on her own life in high school. The knowledge that saved her life didn't come from her classes, family, or her peers. It came through the dedicated efforts of the suicide prevention program run by a West High math teacher. Mental health education works but is rare and not institutionalized. She is in college and wants to be a doctor. Her life is full of passions and joy, but all that was almost lost because she was not taught how to stay healthy. She gave testimony last year about the importance of mental health. The pandemic has reaffirmed that need over and over. Every day as a student, advocate, and friend, she sees how health curriculum fails students. Thousands of students are going through the same struggles she did, uneducated, and she is concerned that many of their outcomes will not be as positive. The Alaska state education system taught her to communicate ideas clearly. It taught her how to be a thoughtful and concerned citizen. She asks the education system to teach one more thing: mental health is health and should be treated as such.

[9:52:53 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau, Alaska, said that the association supports SB

80. Students' mental health is critical to their well-being and creates better student academic achievement.

[9:53:39 AM](#)

LISA PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Juneau, Alaska, said the Alaska Council of School Administrators has a joint position statement on social, emotional, and mental health. Alaska students endure high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Alaska has the highest rates of attempted teen suicide in the nation. The Alaska Council of School Administrators urges the state to provide funding and resources so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally-responsive, school-based mental health programs to foster the health and development of all students. The Alaska Council of School Administrators supports targeted funding to help schools recruit and retain and increase student access to school counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development to all staff to meet the increasing and diverse needs of all students. This type of legislation moves the state in the right direction to support students in an evidence-based way.

[9:55:26 AM](#)

KATIE BOTZ, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, said that the social isolation during COVID has been traumatic, especially when students have an unsafe home environment. She is a school bus driver and noticed fewer students even wanting to speak up about their issues during the pandemic because they are unaware of how to speak up. They don't know that it is okay to share that they are having a difficult time. She asked the committee to support SB 80 because she is a constituent with a major depressive disorder and suffered during the pandemic. It is difficult to deal with depression and mental health, especially with the stigma regarding mental health.

[9:57:43 AM](#)

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, said that now is the time more than ever to help Alaskan students through mental health literacy. Her district is implementing a program regarding social/emotional learning, which involves teaching skills that students and adults need to be successful not only in school but at home, community, and the workplace. As a minor adjustment to the language, which is in line with Mr. Lessard's testimony, what is desired for students is mental health literacy. Literacy is the degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain,

communicate, process, and understand basic information and services to make appropriate decisions. Mental health literacy can be used to guide this work. This definition not only includes the knowledge and beliefs about mental health, but also the promotion of mental health and is in line with the World Health Organization's definition of mental health. Through SB 80, the state can articulate that mental health literacy is a priority for students' education and all students in schools will have the opportunity to become mental health literate. Anchorage School District supports SB 80.

[10:00:11 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND closed public testimony and held SB 80 in committee.

SB 72-SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

[10:01:01 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 72 "An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

He asked for a motion to adopt the committee substitute (CS).

[10:01:12 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS moved to adopt the CS for SB 72, work order 32-LS0478\B, as the working document.

[10:01:26 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND objected for purposed of discussion and asked Mr. Lamkin to explain the committee substitute.

[10:01:38 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, explained the changes in the committee substitute for SB 72:

Change #1

The title, Page 1, Line 1

Delete: "examinations"

Insert: "assessments"

Change #2

Section 1, page 1 of Version A was largely struck and rewritten. The reference to the U.S. Citizenship exam was

deleted and replaced in Version B to instead direct the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development (SBOE) to develop curriculum for, and an assessment that aligns with, existing Alaska education standards for Government and Citizenship. The curriculum is to include traditional American government as well as Alaska native tribal government studies. School Districts are to administer the state assessment to graduating seniors in order to receive a diploma.

Change #3

Section 2, page 2 The reporting requirement was changed to include a summary of what civics courses are offered at the district level, disaggregated by district, as well as data on student performance on the assessment established in Section 1

MR. LAMKIN said that during the first hearing for the bill, there was reference to insensitivity to high-stakes exams in order to graduate. The bill was rewritten to strike reference to the naturalization test currently administered to immigrants wishing to have citizenship. The bill includes a test but not a passing score. The burden is now shifted to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), who will speak to this. The department has resources to develop curriculum and assessment that would be available free of charge to school districts, which would report on student performance on the assessment. The bill also wants to show sensitivity to Alaska's unique cultures and Alaska Native tribal governance.

10:03:39 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND removed his objection. There being no further objection, version B was before the committee.

SENATOR STEVENS said he appreciated the work of his aide in working with DEED. DEED had excellent suggestions. Instead of imposing a national test, DEED will create its own curriculum and assessment. He is pleased to come to that position and anxious to hear from the commissioner.

CHAIR HOLLAND called on Ms. Van Wyhe.

10:04:53 AM

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Anchorage, Alaska, said the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has reviewed the committee substitute

and is appreciative of the language revision. As DEED Commissioner Johnson shared in his earlier comments to the committee, civics education is tremendously important for Alaskan students. That does not and will not change. The department is in the process of updating its social standards now and is assembling a group to work on that. The work of the department required by the bill is doable and could occur in a timely manner since the department is in the midst of the work. The assembled group of educators will review the College Career and Civic Life (C3) framework, which has a clearly defined focus on civics. The fiscal note has not been updated. There is language in the committee substitute about the development of an assessment. There is cost involved with that. DEED is supportive of the bill and appreciative of the efforts to highlight civics as critical content for students. As Commissioner Johnson said earlier, this bill is not a new coat of paint on the public education system. It is a much needed effort to repair the foundation.

SENATOR BEGICH shared that he received a note from Spike Jorgensen, who was the Alaska Gateway superintendent. Mr. Jorgensen comes back to the same point. The legislature could keep working on things like this, and Senator Begich is a cosponsor of the bill, but until the university and its teacher program are in alignment with the things the legislature is asking teachers to do, there will always be a gap. Senator Begich and Senator Stevens have tried to focus on the university's program to make sure it is meeting with the department and doing the work it needs to do to ensure that teachers trained at the university will meet those standards that the department is setting. The legislature will pass a good bill, but the state must find a way to ensure that the teachers being educated in Alaska actually do and abide by and are taught with the curriculum the legislature is asking them to teach when they come to the state system.

10:08:47 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony on SB 72.

10:08:54 AM

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau, Alaska, said that the Association of Alaska School Boards has a resolution in support of encouraging civics education in school districts. It recognizes the importance of civics. He was prepared to speak in opposition about another high-stakes test. Instead he will express gratitude for removing that portion from the bill in the committee substitute. He

thanked Senator Stevens for SB 72. Civics education is important to create citizens. He stated support for the committee substitute for SB 72.

[10:10:36 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND closed public testimony and held SB 72 in committee.

[10:11:13 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:11 a.m.